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Assembly California Legislature



ROB BONTA

ASSEMBLYMEMBER, EIGHTEENTH DISTRICT

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November 24, 2015

Dr. Thomas Adams
Executive Director, Curriculum Commission
California Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5901

Re: Implementation of AB 199 (Ma, 2011) -- the role of Filipinos during World War II

Dear Dr. Adams and Members of the Instructional Quality Commission:

I am writing to express my strong support for the full implementation of AB 199 (Ma, 2011). AB 199 encourages instruction on Filipinos' role in World War II into the curriculum framework for Grade 11 U.S. History. The law further encourages that the instruction include a component drawn from personal testimony in the form of oral or video histories of American soldiers who were involved in the war.

In order to ensure that generations of California students have the opportunity to learn about the contributions of Filipino World War II veterans, it's critical that we collect these personal histories immediately. There are only a handful of Filipino World War II veteran survivors left, and with their advancing ages, the window to collect these personal histories is rapidly closing. The Filipino American population composes the largest Asian population in California and continues to grow; yet the story of Filipinos and their crucial efforts to the California Farm Labor Movement and their role in protecting our country as heroic soldiers is, unfortunately, an untold part of California history.

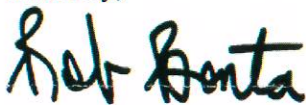
As the first Filipino American state legislator elected to the California State Legislature in the 165-year history of our state, it has been a priority of mine to highlight the contributions Filipino Americans have made to our state and country. That is why it was important to me to author AB 123 (Bonta, 2013), to give a whole new generation of school children the opportunity to learn about the tremendous contributions of Filipino Americans to the California Farm Labor Movement. And, with the passage of my AB 7, Californians will now annually commemorate the October 25th birthday of California hero and Filipino farm labor leader Larry Itliong.

AB 123 and AB 7 will positively impact both Filipino American and non-Filipino American students by informing more accurate and complete historical perspectives for all. Increasing awareness of ancestral and national histories empowers younger generations. We can strengthen and supplement these efforts by implementing AB 199.

Filipinos' role in the Battle of Bataan during World War II delayed the timetable of the Japanese Army and enabled the Allied Forces to harness the necessary resources that eventually led to their ultimate victory. But, many lives were lost before then, including an estimated 10,000 Filipino and 750 American soldiers claimed in a brutal 60 mile forced march, now known as the Bataan Death March. Another 20,000 Filipinos and 1,600 Americans died as prisoners of war, and by the end of the World War II, approximately one million civilians lost their lives in the Philippines.

I strongly urge members of the Instructional Quality Commission to fully implement AB 199 to reflect the full and complete contributions of Filipinos during World War II. By collecting the personal histories of Filipino American veterans, you will ensure that their significant contributions to our state and the world are rightfully recognized for many generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Bonta". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "R" and a cursive "Bonta".

ROB BONTA

Assembly Member, 18th District

cc: The Honorable Members of the Instructional Quality Commission
Tom Torlakson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Monica Henestroza, Speaker Atkins' Policy Office
Fiona Ma, Board of Equalization, District 2